

### **Spanish Inquisition (p. 488-489)**

- Spending a little more time on the Inquisition because this is a perfect example of looking past what is widely accepted, digging past the myth, and going back to the actual historical records to find out what actually happened.
- So many of the things we think we know about the Spanish Inquisition are wrong.
- After the dictator Francisco Franco died in 1975, previously closed archives were opened to historians, allowing for greater detail to be studied.
- Since then, historians have been able to examine the extensive records of the Inquisition with greater ease and accuracy. Historians are looking at this almost-four century long period with new eyes and have new information
- Historians like Professor Edward Peters of the University of Pennsylvania, Professor Henry Kamen of the University of Warrick and the Higher Council for Scientific Research in Barcelona, Professor Stephen Haliczer of Northern University of Illinois, and Professor Jose Alvarez-Junco of Tufts University delved into these newly opened records and have been able to give an entirely new perspective on how the Inquisition was conducted.
  - Every one of the cases that came before the Inquisition over its 350 year history had its own file
  - They were able to be studied for the very first time in the 1970s
  - Demolished the previous image of the inquisition
  - Why? The files are detailed and exhaustive → clerks wrote down every detail in confidence that they were secret → only lawyers, judges of the Inquisition would see them. Not for the public.

- Peters stated that “The Inquisition was an image assembled from a body of legends and myths which, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, established the perceived character of inquisitorial tribunals and influenced all ensuing efforts to recover their historical reality.”
  - Two most significant sources are *Inquisition* by Edward Peters and *The Spanish Inquisition: An Historical Revision* by Henry Kamen
- The book gets pretty much everything about the Spanish Inquisition wrong, including defining what an auto-da-fé was. It was NOT a show trial. Inquisition courts were absolutely not open to the public. Rather, an auto-da-fé (“act of faith”) was public penance for those who had been found guilty by the Court of the Inquisition. Sentences from the court could include: financing the construction of a church, visitation to a church, a pilgrimage, offering of a candle (most common). Less common were fines, whipping with rods during religious service, the pillory, wearing colored crosses for a certain amount of time. Harshest penalties were imprisonment, excommunication, surrender to civil power for harsher sentencing. The Inquisition did not execute. The State did.
- Inquisitions began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and soon spread throughout all of Europe
  - Auto-da-fé first described in France in 1242
- Inquisition established in Spain in 1480 → discover heresy
  - No political unity without religious unity
  - Focused initially on conversos (Jewish converts)
- 1480-1510 → most active in the entire 350-year history of the inquisition
  - Applauded by rest of Europe → finally a “Christian Spain”

- Modern perspective is that the rest of Europe was horrified by the Spanish Inquisition, that they were all pointing their lily-white hands in horror at the barbaric Spanish. Not the case.
- 1517 → Reformation split Christian Europe
  - Protestants targeted the power and wealth of the Catholic Church
- Battle of Mühlberg in 1547
  - Huge battle between Habsburg forces (Catholic) and forces of Elector of Saxony (Protestant) – Protestant forces completely routed on the battlefield (lost over 50% of forces through death, wounding, or capture)
  - Spain became seen as the defender of Catholicism → target
- Reformers turned to the printing press
  - Huge opportunity for propaganda
  - Invented in and spread fastest in countries sympathetic to reformers (Germany, England, Scotland, Holland)
  - Within a year of the Battle of Mühlberg, printing presses across Europe were churning out anti-Spanish propaganda
- “A Discovery and playne Declaration of sundry subtill practices of the Holy Inquisition of Spayne” by Montanus in 1567
  - Pen name for Antonio del Coro, a Catholic-turned-Protestant exile
  - Within a year, translated into English, French, Dutch, German
  - Author claimed to be a German victim of the Inquisition
  - Brought supposed horrors of Inquisition alive → torture, rape, greed, religious intolerance

- Image has persisted ever since
- Contributed decisively to “Black Legend”
  - Rumors, myths, image of Spain
  - Hooded fiends, religious fanatics
- Who were the Inquisitors?
  - Legal experts, administrators
  - Didn’t even have to be priests
  - Many were lawyers trained at universities
  - Bureaucrats make boring copy
- Process of Inquisition
  - Month-long term of grace → announced by Inquisitor when he came into a district
    - Allowed inhabitants to appear before Inquisitor, confess their sins, perform penance
    - Those who confessed heresy of their own free will were given penance
      - Pilgrimage
      - Fasting
      - Wearing crosses on their clothes
      - Never imprisoned, turned over to civil authorities
  - If accused did not confess, trial began
    - Accused asked to swear innocence on four Gospels
    - Continued to claim innocence, continued questioning by Inquisitors
      - Rare use of torture

- If still did not confess, subject to confinement
- Evidence was needed for conviction
  - Had to be two witnesses – sometimes more – to convict of heresy
  - False testimony → possible death penalty from civil authorities
- Witnesses for defense, legal advisers were rare → did not want to be accused of heresy
- Ultimate decision of the Inquisition – pronounced with solemn ceremony
  - Offenses were announced, punishments assigned to guilty party (auto-da-fé)
  - Those found guilty were turned over to the secular authority for punishment
- Torture
  - Montanus associated Inquisition with torture chamber
    - Ingenious sadism
    - Iron maiden – never used
  - Torture used very infrequently
    - Strict guidelines → Had a rule book as to what could and could not be done. Torture could not be for more than 15 minutes, could not be disfiguring/permanently debilitating (no broken bones, roast victims' feet, brick them up alive, flail them on wheels, use iron maiden, crushing hands and feet in a boot, not hysterectomies). Severe punishments for inquisitors who broke the rules
    - Dr. Stephen Haliczer → using Valencia as a baseline, only about 2% of those examined experienced any form of torture at all; all less than 15 minutes; less than 1% suffered torture twice. Never more than that

- Inquisitors did not trust confessions achieved under torture
- Surprisingly, used far less than other tribunals in Spain, used far less than other European courts
  - England → could be executed for damaging shrubs in public garden
  - Germany → return from banishment = eyes gouged out
  - France → disemboweled for sheep stealing
- Prisons
  - Half-naked, starving, dehydrated, tormented victims living in squalor – untrue
  - Inquisition had best conditions of any prison in Spain
    - Not intended to punish – just to isolate
    - Prisoners in secular courts were known to blaspheme in order to get into Inquisition prisons
    - Prisoners had access to a doctor as well as a priest or confessor
    - Prisoners received a standard diet of seasonal food
      - Wealthy who could pay more could get more food
    - Inquisitors had to inspect the prisons several times a year in order to make sure that the conditions of the cells and prisoners met regulations
    - Cells were unfurnished → prisoners expected to furnish own cell according to their social class, station, economic resources → standard throughout Europe
    - Distribution of candles, bedpans, pots for prisoners' use
    - Could request to have hair cut by a barber – on staff – and a shave

- Received regular rations, medical treatment
- Witches
  - Frenzy throughout Europe between 1450 and 1750
  - Merest implication of fantastic offense – sleeping with the devil, bearing his children, etc. – women were tortured or burned at the stake
  - Approximately 150,000 witches were burned throughout Europe – except in Spain
  - Inquisitors were university lawyers – looked for evidence
    - Said there that witchcraft was an imaginary offence with no evidence
    - Declared it a delusion – no trial for it
- 1570 → Spanish troops occupying much of Europe
  - Document released claiming to be from Inquisition – has been proven a forgery
  - Alleged that Inquisition had decided to exterminate entire population for heresy
  - Claimed the Inquisition had between hundreds of thousands and millions of victims
- Fewer people died for heresy in 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain than in any other Western country
  - Inquisition in whole of 16<sup>th</sup> century → at most 40-50 people executed; includes Spanish America as well
  - Within same century, at least 400 English were executed at hands of English Inquisition
  - France → within 5-6 years, about 300 people executed

- Between 1480 and 1835, 150,000 people were charged and brought before the Inquisition. Between 3-5 thousand people were executed (Henry VIII is credited with 72,000 executions between 1509 and 1547)
- Within a period of 300 years (1450-1740), as many as 150,000 witches were burned at the stake in the rest of Europe in France, Germany, England, Scandinavia (Protestant and Catholic)

Not an attempt to justify Inquisitions. Religion should never be forced. However, it is an attempt to clarify and to put into proper perspective the truth about the Spanish Inquisition during a period when violence, religious or secular, was incredibly prevalent.